

FOREWORD

John Hammersley was Secretary of PARISH & PEOPLE in its early days. Later he wrote 'Psalms of Life', a selection of which were published by P&P during his lifetime and are still available. For these he wrote this introduction:

'A "psalm" like one of the psalms of David, for example is a way of talking to God. Expressing feelings that I might not otherwise want to express in public: anger or frustration, love or passion, prayer or praise. A "psalm" is a way of saying with a group of people some of those things we like to put up on the walls of our kitchen that we don't normally say out loud, but which give us a certain confidence, or allow us a certain way of ... well, praying.

So why should King David have all the best prayers? Perhaps we need some more psalms today in our own thought forms and in our own culture. Psalms of our life, not just from the life experience of other people who lived a couple of millennia ago. So this is an attempt to write some.

I suppose a psalm is also poetry. But I have been struck by the special nature of Hebrew poetry written in poetic parallelism, using a particular kind of conversational tone, even questioning or complaining. It feels a bit Jewish - you can get away with saying things in a psalm that you cannot say in ordinary life or in ordinary church worship! Perhaps there are some subjects, like work, that we should be speaking to God about more than we usually do? Easiest of all, is to speak to God about the Word of creation - God's creation, as we say. Especially so, in an age when we are conscious of the need to look at it in a new way, for conservation rather than for exploitation. A psalm can also be a "political" statement. Indeed, a psalm is about life, and the things that are important for us - the world, work and worship. '

John set himself the task of writing 150 psalms as in the Psalter. These 31 psalms are on the theme of Creation, even more topical now.

John died on All Saints Day 2004. His obituary printed in the CHURCH TIMES can be found at <http://www.parishandpeople.org.uk/jch.html>

PSALM 31 A TE DEUM

Alliteration - as in Mystery Plays

Mighty maker of complete creation:
original author of all that is,

*marvellous and merciful, we wonder and worship:
we practise our praise for your greatness is gracious.*

Christ, you are crown of the whole of humanity:
the first and the final one, Jesus our judge,

*my Lord and my God, I give you my love:
I will follow your footsteps wherever you will.*

Spirit, inspirer of speech and action:
give us sounds for our mouths and we'll sing you our songs,

*blowing and blazing you give us your blessing:
when we are together you touch all our hearts.*

The Trinity we trust - you are worthy of worship:
great God we celebrate you in our psalms,

*you make us, re-make us, and give us your grace:
you are strength for my striving and peace in our pilgrimage.*

These 'Psalms of Life' by John Hammersley have been laid out to encourage their use in worship, as John intended, at Deanery Synods and other gatherings.

For that purpose they may be scanned and copied, provided that John Hammersley's name is included on the copies and stating they have been published by **PARISH & PEOPLE**.

The Psalms printed here, with others by John, can also be found on the ***Psalms of Life*** website <<http://www.psalmsoflife.com>>

I can see your presence clearly, when all is green:
but you are there also in the autumn, in the browns and reds;

*I can hear your voice addressing me, when all is silent:
yet you speak to me also in crowds, in the bustle of business.*

I'm nearer to you in a garden:
and the quietness can focus my listening;

*but teach me to keep the garden always within me:
anywhere else on earth, to be conscious of you.*

PSALM 30 EASTER PSALM

The story of Easter happens on one day, the day of Jesus' resurrection. The reality of Easter takes all of us very much longer. My experience of Easter has taken a lifetime.

There's always something beyond, spring says:
Easter celebrates the something more.

*Life seems to do things to me, without me trying:
suffering, struggle and failure are ever present,*

but Easter points us on to the future beyond:
still there is something more for me and for others –

*every day there is hope, pointing forward:
there can be respite available even from pain.*

Why do I usually think of myself as a failure:
there is always room for me to be myself.

*Why do I usually fear what may happen tomorrow:
there is always a springtime coming, out ahead of me.*

We celebrate with joy the something more:

daffodils and eggs have their message, after all!

PSALM 1 PSALM OF CREATION

John's first psalm written in about 1987

As I look to the east I praise you, my God:
from the rising of the sun you uphold my life;

*when the sun goes down again I give you thanks:
you are my strength from beginning to end.*

The whole created universe shares in our praise and gratitude:
for you have made all that is, whether seen or unseen -

*hill and valley, tree and flower:
the earth in all its beauty is yours;*

earthquake and storm, wind and flood, keep us in awe of you:
the power of the lightning is also your creation.

*The workman labours with the sweat of his brow:
he shares in your redemptive work;*

the secretary and teacher work for you:
those who use their mind and imagination -

*the executive making important decisions:
those who care for others and serve our needs.*

All whose work is hard, toil with your blessing:
those who find fulfilment in work can see it as part of your purpose.

*So can we all in more humble activities:
as cleaner, sweeper, gardener or child.*

Those whom society rejects are in your special care:
and those who have no place in a world of work;

*without them your creation would be incomplete:
your plan includes our work and our unemployment.*

Jesus was friend of the poor and outcast:
he was also a carpenter working for his living.

*We thank you, Holy Spirit, for your gift of enterprise:
the spark of your creative power.*

For your love builds us all together:
and shows us how to make one another great.

PSALM 2 PSALM OF PEACE

Why do the nations of the world continually fight one another:
why do our leaders put power before peace?

*Selfish greed can lead to violence:
we do what we want, in spite of hurting others.*

Human beings seem bound to suffer violence from others:
our wars are often civil strife,

*among Muslims or Christians, between Arab and Jew:
between black and white races or divided cultures;*

people are killed for politics:
murders are committed to express a point of view!

*Why must disputes escalate into anger:
why find solutions only after a row?*

I'd like to be able to talk out my differences:
a compromise must be better than fighting.

*Teach me to argue without quarrelling: ¹
hold me from the brink of violence, if I do quarrel.*

For enemies I'll certainly have around me
but they have a right to their part of your world;

*if I quarrel with my neighbour, stop me from suspecting:
and if I suspect, keep my tongue from slander.*

Peace is not to be found in weakness:
it's stronger than war, and tougher than selfishness.

PSALM 3 A PSALM OF LIFE

Why are you so depressing, religious man:
telling me life is only an empty dream?

¹ Kurt Hahn, Founder of Gordonstoun School: Education is to teach people 'to argue without quarrelling, to quarrel without suspecting. and to suspect without slandering.'

*as the taste of food in the mouth removes pangs of hunger:
the experience I've gained so far takes the labour out of learning.*

Teach me, God, to find you backwards:
for treating you as history doesn't seem to work out!

*Early Christians found you in Antioch:
looking back they saw Jesus your Son as risen and ascended;*

later on, they wrote down his story:
gospel writers had messages to share -

*as the prism that separates fractured light:
the dazzling truth of God shines through my past.*

In looking back from today I see flashes of presence:
we cannot expect to see you, by being in front of you -

*just as Moses was asking to see your glory:
but was only able to bear to look at your back.*

If it's in looking backwards I can see more colour:
help me also look forward in hope -

*as Moses climbed the mountain into cloud:
I can travel from childish certainties to find your mystery. ¹*

PSALM 29 QUIET GARDEN PSALM

'Write a Psalm Day' 24/11/1994 for Philip Roderick

Your garden, my God, is green and beautiful:
in the comforting quietness I can feel your presence.

*My house is not always so relaxing:
our family can often be angry and fraught with noise!*

Help me to find your presence wherever I am:
to hear your silence in the daily press.

*For I'm nearer to God in a garden:
than anywhere else on earth.*

¹ Lavinia Byrne *Women before God*

PSALM 27 A BENEDICITE

Praise God all created things:
praise and glorify God together.

*People of God, bless your creator:
praise and glorify God together.*

The heavens and the galaxies and the vastness of space:
animals and birds and living creatures on the earth,

*the natural world and our surroundings:
praise and glorify God together.*

Our cities and towns and the built environment:
the nations of the earth and all its people,

*those who work or travel or enjoy their leisure:
praise and glorify God together.*

In our families and intimate relationships:
our community and all political life,

*as we care for the needy and befriend the lonely:
we praise and glorify God together.*

All who worship you by whatever name:
praise and glorify God together.

*People of God, bless your creator:
praise and glorify God together.*

PSALM 28 PSALM OF EXPERIENCE

Teach me, God, to see life backwards:
to praise you for everything I've learned.

*A sunset redeems the dulllest day:
I can look back from today in brilliant technicolour;*

for you help me see glory in ordinary things:
to feel significance in daily living -

*Of course, we don't have life merely to die:
the grave a final end for a life asleep,*

but there's nothing so good as death to focus the mind:
a wake up call for life, and life is full,

*for life is real and earnest all day long:
our lives are only fleeting, art survives.*

So we can strive to act, improve the hour:
that every new tomorrow makes for progress,

*the present's to enjoy and lead us on:
to be heroic now, achieving more,*

to leave behind some footprints on the sand:
perhaps to give encouragement to one who follows.

*Up and learn to live and also wait:
for God goes on before and justice calls.*

PSALM 4 PSALM OF CREATION

This earth is your creation and you sustain it:
everything there is around me declares your glory;

*a million light years ago you were at work:
underneath me now are your everlasting arms.*

Your love is greater than the universe:
your goodness too profound for me to comprehend.

*For all that has been, thanks: ¹
to everything that shall be, let me say 'Yes'.*

The trees that surround us are strong and sure:
a gale might cause some damage but not destroy them all;

*my grandparents saw the same view as I do:
these trees have been standing for generations.*

The quiet hills beyond them reflect your presence:
my anxious mind breathes in your freedom;

¹ Dag Hammarsjold *Markings*

*I listen in the noisy silence for your still small voice:
I scan the natural world for the nature of God.*

This world is our creation and we are making it:
everything we have around us shows human ingenuity;

*the heritage from times past proves our achievements:
conservation makes us give value to what we build.*

Your gracious encouragement helps us continue:
we are powerfully driven by your inspiration;

*the creativeness within us is yours:
the force that raised Jesus from the dead.*

Architecture raises our eyes:
design brings beauty to our human environment.

*The computer benefits everyone today:
my grandparents' drudgery is eased by new technology.*

The city provides infinite choice:
when so much is happening, what of the future?

*Transport has given us all more freedom:
television has opened up the world.*

Your creation, God, overflows with your faithfulness:
I can trust you, for you are my creator,

*in everything I do, I praise you:
you direct me in all my makings.*

Lord Jesus, you opened your arms on the cross:
you are always open-handed and forgiving,

*new every morning is your gift of resurrection:
you can redeem what I have made amiss.*

Spirit, you bring harmony to a troubled world:
you give us your grace for new endeavours,

*it's your love that binds us to one another:
so we're able to share our gifts.*

Everything points to the trinity of love:
our living discloses your active care.

*that hillside has no heather and trees are felled:
in unfamiliar pools, the fishermen are standing.*

Visitors are different today, parking their cars:
each with their trekker stick or powered wheelchair.

*Tranquillity reflects your presence, changing too:
my God, you are always the same and ever new.*

PSALM 26 PSALM OF CLOUDS

a woman in a Methodist home; Tony Benn *Free at Last*

The elderly person was dying, a wonderful life:
always full of gratitude, a lovely lady,

*confined to lie in bed by one high window:
"So long as I can see the clouds," she said with a grin,*

*"for they are always changing, shapes I recognise:
a cat or someone's face, surprising and fresh,*

*a cloud in a wide blue sky like a humpback whale:
or reclining Mr Punch, making me smile."*

Help me, God, to live so positively:
let cheerfulness keep breaking in day after day,

*for there is no need to fear whatever comes:
the everlasting arms are underneath.*

PSALM 24 PSALM OF WINTER

inspired by *Advent Calendar*, poem by Rowan Williams

God will come unseen, like autumn leaves:
he has come already and we noticed nothing!

*For leaves have fallen at random, feeding the earth:
warming the slippery ground, leaving us a mess.*

God will come unheard, like the frost:
already he has been here, biting and sharp;

*yet snow brings beauty, too, patterned and clear:
pointing up the shape of branches we hadn't seen before.*

God will come unwanted, like the dark:
already he has lived and died among us.

*The darkness may bring sadness, in a dreary winter:
why is it so hard to accept a dying at Christmas?*

God will bring gifts unbidden, like the day:
he brightens up our future, as a child.

*All that we have is given, a gift unearned:
his birth and death today make mine a bargain.*

PSALM 25 PSALM OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

reflections on visits to Chatsworth and Bolton Abbey

The river babbles on, the ducks are gliding:
the English country estate rests on its slopes –

*nothing here has altered from childhood memories:
the country remains the same for each generation.*

Yet everything has also changed – the swallows are gone:
sparrows have all disappeared, things move on;

*You have called me and you are to be trusted:
you are our God for ever and ever.*

PSALM 5 PSALM OF CREATION

Thanks be to God for making the darkness:
... it isn't enough that you gave us the light;

*without the night, we couldn't see the stars:
we shouldn't be able to sleep if there were no rest from brightness.*

The night brings its own kind of beauty and excitement:
it's the time for leisure and for real enjoyment;

*we know that black is beautiful:
dark skin a sign of health in a white society;*

it's blackness that shows up what happens in the light:
the drama on stage or screen we see from darkened surroundings;

*the sad sweet songs of past days praised the darkness:
the richest of all tunes in nature comes from the nightingale.*

Help us appreciate the dark in your creation:
Lucifer's the one who brings evil, and he was the angel of light!

*For you are God, and you rule the darkness as well as the day:
you have made the blackness of space majestic.*

PSALM 6 PSALM OF CREATION

We look up in wonder to the sky at night:
the twinkling stars above us adorn your heavens.

*In a hundred million galaxies we stand on planet earth:
from this edge of the universe we look out and watch.*

Our telescopes look back billions of years:
experts can guess what might have been in the beginning -

*the big bang that started the expanding universe:
the red shift that shows the stars that are rushing away from us.*

But have scientists got the answers right:
is our knowledge built on mistaken assumptions?

*Telescopes outside earth's atmosphere can see things differently:
future discoveries could change our perceptions.*

As we depend on the sun for our existence:
it may be other suns that will determine our future -

*the pulsar reveals its beacon of light:
as the pointing star led wise men to look at God afresh.*

Some theories are supposed to prove you don't exist:
but I know you now and in my own experience.

*Here am I, looking up to wonder:
an individual on a very small planet.*

Our earth is kept alive and warm by an insignificant sun:
we only exist at the outskirts of an emerging universe.

*In your purpose, I'm not at the centre of existence:
as I look up I feel so small, and yet you love me!*

PSALM 7 CREDAL PSALM

David E Jenkins - *God, Jesus and Life in the Spirit*

I believe that God is:
that is all that needs to be stated.

*God is as Jesus shows us:
and therefore there is hope.*

We believe that God is:
that is all we need to say,

*God is always on our side:
so the struggle of life is worth it.*

PSALM 22 IONA PSALM

meditation on a stone given to him in hospital by Sue Hammersley

Holy, grey and green, this stone in my hand:
marbled Iona rock of promise and hope,

*in it are Arctic breakers, violent, weathered:
the calm clear waters of the mull of peace.*

Pointers to Columba are here, Scots faith-bringer:
of Margaret, the good abbess, ruined walls,

*with the vision of George MacLeod, a new community:
and Ralph Morton's wisdom, hope provoking.*

Revealing God in the High Street, voice in the wind:
a gesture against the wild in city and island.

*So, God, help me discover your promise to me:
your hope seen in the centuries for my future, too.*

PSALM 23 PSALM OF WORK

God is my gracious manager:
I know I'll always have a job to do.

*You make certain I take responsibility:
you see that I'm kept up to the mark.*

You help me feel confident in my work:
when things begin to get difficult you're always on hand to listen,

*when we're successful, you congratulate us:
you encourage us all in our common enterprise.*

Into our community you bring your communion:
as we work together you give strength to sustain us.

*Now I have a purpose I can aim for:
the final goal may not be clear, but I can see what I have to do next;*

for you give me the target I need:

and together with my colleagues we'll achieve what's to be done.

*progress must continue for humanity:
even if not for me, the future's infallible.*

We'd like to believe that life will go on:
this planet cocooned in the palm of your hand;

*but isn't that arrogant and selfish:
where is your promise of the 'end of the world'?*

A doctor must try to avoid the suggestion of death:
hospitals are there to keep us alive;

*surgery can offer me continuing youthfulness:
any expense is worth while to keep dying at bay.*

But you have taught us that you are my end:
it's only by dying that I'm born again;

*Jesus fulfilled your will by dying:
to live and settle down was his last temptation.*

Today we're expected to face global catastrophe:
the explosion of the earth by comet or collision,

*or we'll bomb or pollute ourselves out of existence:
just like the dinosaurs, humanity could perish.*

So help me, God, to face up to my end:
I know I must die, can I find you in my dying?

*Help us as nations take finality as possible:
you are in our endings as you were in our beginnings.*

Guide us in living with the chance of disaster:
sudden death not the horror that it held for our forbears.

*If you are with me today, and close to me this minute:
your kingdom of heaven is always at hand.*

PSALM 8 PSALM OF FAITH

It's comforting to think again over the past:
for memories needn't be threatening.

*I look back with easy detachment:
as you, God, look on me in your infinite mercy.*

Earlier battles have faded, they're not so critical:
past stupidities no longer have power;
*previous glories have a mellower radiance:
recalling former happiness can staunch my depression.*

So, God, increase my faith:
help us, Father, to worship you in everything that's happened,

*strengthen and confirm our trust in you:
grant us to share the vision of your faithfulness.*

The future holds fearful uncertainties:
the struggle ahead looks long and painful.

*The gap between rich and poor seems set to widen;
conflicts of races and cultures to escalate into violence;*

we continually misuse our environment:
yet your purposes are ever closer to fruition.

*The end of our exploring is to arrive where we began:
and know ourselves better than before.*

So, God, deepen my hope:
help us, Christ our Lord, to face the future with your obedience,

*for all things shall be well:
all manner of things shall be well.*

God, you are eternally now:
all time is focused in this present moment.

*Even when I've been through a time like this before:
I need to approach it fresh and with humbler reverence.*

Help me travel on, adoring your love:
to go forward, serving the world around me,

*and to see these are not two separate journeys:
but roads that meet in this moment in your presence.*

So, God, widen my love:
help us, Holy Spirit, to be conscious of your sustaining power,

*for this time is given us out of your grace:
we'll find your eternal present within our own experiences.*

PSALM 9 PSALM OF FAITH

Most people think of you as boring and distant:
belief in God points to weakness or to problems in infancy.

*But surely that can't be right:
or, if it's sometimes true, it cannot be universal?*

Either you don't exist and you aren't a god:
or, if you're really God, you're vital to all of us.

*Belief is the only thing that makes any sense:
the alternatives don't add up to anything at all.*

If I am simply alone, the aloneness is unbearable:
if I am only a worm, why do I have such longings?

*It's simpler to believe in you:
I need to rest in something beyond myself.*

Then you must be more important than just a god:
you are critical for my confidence and for my future;

*I don't have to be out of the ordinary to believe in you:
faith is part of what it means to be human.*

Nobody thinks it odd that I believe and trust in my partner:
why should it be so strange to believe and trust in God?

*Perhaps it's just religion that's controversial:
faith and trust in you are crucial to life.*

PSALM 20 PSALM OF CREATION

David Attenborough *Living Planet* BBCtv September 1992

Thunder shows the disapproval of the gods:
yet your approval of Jesus was heard as thunder!

*Does lightning mean you're angry with me:
is there still power in primitive ideas?*

The forces around us can be frightening, however caused:
the earth has terrifying wonders to shake us -

*the earthquake that unsettles a mighty city:
the eruption that rips open the quiet mountain-side.*

No matter what we do to pollute our planet:
the forces inside it still change our world.

*If the lava-flow can be home to life in a hundred years:
the earth may yet survive the end of humanity.*

Your time, our God, is far longer than ours:
your purposes don't depend only on me;

*why should I think this day's work so vital:
why do we feel that we're at the centre of time?*

When we're as dead as the dinosaurs, you'll be alive:

if our experiment fails, you could re-create your world.

PSALM 21 PSALM OF THE END

Victor Clube *Horizon* BBCtv March 1994

God, we've forgotten your teaching:
that the kingdom of heaven is close to us!

*Humanity seems to have been around so long:
we assume our life just continues for ever.*

We no longer believe in resurrection:
these days we think we're immortal -

PSALM 19 PSALM OF CREATION

Nigel Cooper *Partnering Nature* - Crucible April 1992

Here I sit looking through the window at your creation:
but I am also created, a piece of your making -

*fresh air from your world beyond comes into my nostrils:
your breath builds up my blood, and gets into my brain!*

Even while sitting and breathing I belong to your world:
where does my body end, and nature begin?

*This earth is not just another thing outside myself:
your whole creation is a mystery of which I'm a part.*

In our own eyes we think of ourselves as distinct and different:
we feel that humanity can dominate the beasts and the earth,

*but we cannot simply be selfish, we'll have to repent:
we must turn ourselves round before nature bites back;*

the trees and the animals we've exploited, we'd now like to save:
to begin to plan for the future and learn from the past,

*for everything is your creating and we can treasure it:
even if we damage our surroundings, we'll value the planet.*

To be able to be fully human, we need your creation:
and I need other people, to be really myself,

*so nature requires us also to be part of her life:
I rely on the natural world so that I can survive.*

We all can join in the dance with your world of nature:
we share the music of the spheres, and you are our teacher,

*for even the dance of death helps others to live:
Lord of the dance, let me be your partner.*

PSALM 10 PSALM OF TRUST

Isaiah 12;2 used in a Quiet Day with Francis Dewar at St John's Durham

You are my strength and my song, my God:
I trust in you and I shall not fear.

*My heart is dancing, if not my feet:
before I even think of you, you are my creator;*

it's you who sustain me on my journey:
wherever I go, you are there before me -

*you are my strength and my song:
I trust in you and I shall not fear.*

It's your sun that warms my limbs:
your wind that chills, and sharpens my feelings.

*You care for the simple blackbird:
your love for me is sweet and powerful.*

God says: "I love you, you are precious to me:
just as you are, you are my friend and partner."

*For you are my strength and my song:
I trust in you and I shall not fear.*

PSALM 11 PSALM OF TRUST

based on 'A Chant' in *Learning All Together* - Scripture Union 1987

God has given us a promise:
you will never let us down,

*just the same as long ago:
you will never let us down.*

Noah knew you could be trusted:
you will never let us down,

*when the dove came with a branch:
you will never let us down.*

You put a rainbow in the sky:
you will never let us down,

*and still promise us your care:
you will never let us down.*

For we know you'll never fail us:
you will never let us down,

*as we follow you and love you:
you will never let us down.*

And we thank you for your love:
you will never let us down,

*while the rainbow tells us why:
for God will never let us down.*

PSALM 12 PSALM OF PRAYER

after Josephine Baxter *The Good Wine* CIO 1986

I don't know how to pray:
my God, you're far away from me.

*The words don't come easily any more:
phrases I know by heart don't seem so genuine.*

My energy is drained, you don't feel near me:
dryness and boredom have taken a hold on me;

*I know you're close but I cannot see you:
you seem to be here, but out of focus.*

My life's full of tensions, I'm not able to relax:
stresses and strains make me certain I cannot cope.

*God, you are nearer to me than my breathing:
yet my heart goes blank and my mind won't grasp you.*

Others have travelled this road before:
why do I have to struggle to find the way for myself?

*Be close to me again, let me feel your presence:
help me hold my mind in my heart,*

though we still don't understand its life:
there are yet more areas of wilderness for us to study.

*Have you ever heard silence like the sound up north:
or have you met God whose sound is silence?*

This wilderness is beyond our habitation:
yet there are creatures here that do find a living.

*New lands are exciting places - we like to be curious:
the borders of things are attractive for us to discover.*

We come with assumptions of what to expect:
in a region that's unexplored we want to take charge of it;

*yet to battle with hostile elements is not why we go:
but to learn to live a new life and see what it offers us.*

So I respectfully bow towards all this land is:
because of its boundless riches in unlikely places.

*Human beings have power over other creatures:
technology gives us the feeling that we're in control,*

but we'll need to practice restraint:
we must learn when to defer to what's around us.

*Mother earth has nurtured us well:
we'll only destroy ourselves unless we acknowledge her -*

the coral reefs are shrinking through human pollution:
tropical forests are cleared by companies exploiting them;

*if we continue to overfish, we'll lose a livelihood:
if we selfishly use all resources, the earth will reject us.*

It's possible to survive and live well on this planet:
I make a deep bow to the land with its wonderful riches.

*Our ancestors were able to live here adjusted to nature:
we are disturbing the balance and losing respect for the earth,*

in such an abundance of life, help us, God, to revere it:

to make our bow to this earth and acknowledge your goodness.

We don't need to look for solutions that fit in with you:
whatever is unexplored, you perceive already.

*Amid the wonders around me how small am I;
what's a mere irritation in my life compared with your universe?*

PSALM 17 PSALM OF THE TRINITY

Before the world began - hymn by John Bell & Graham Maule

Before all things began, the Word was there:
one Word of life already, at the world's creation;

*for what God was, the Word was also:
rooted and grounded in love, for God is love.*

All creation was made by the Word of God:
all love was shown by God, and by that Word on earth,

*for through him, God spoke to us:
and, by his Word, God said, "I love you".*

The Spirit was there already when all things were created:
your breath moved over the mists at the world's beginning;

*since that Spirit is the Spirit of love:
inspiring and encouraging us all, you are in us always.*

So Creator and Spirit are one:
you've been here since the beginning, and you're also with us,

*in loving and creating you are at work:
your love is in us now, through Word and Spirit.*

PSALM 18 PSALM OF REVERENCE

inspired by Barry Lopez in Arctic Dreams BBCtv 3/9/91

I bow to the birds in the Arctic:
I acknowledge the landscape around me in darkness and cold.

*Our earth is itself an organism:
seen as a whole from space, it's like a plant or animal;*

give life to the dry bones of my will:
bring renewal to my tired understanding,

*then I'll thank you with all my power:
and praise you from the depths of my being.*

PSALM 13 PSALM OF PRAYER

Parish Prayer card, Swaledale, N Yorks

Thank you God, that I'm sometimes strong:
and help me when I am weak.

*Thank you that sometimes I'm able to trust:
and guard me when faith is dim.*

Thank you that I'm sometimes wise:
and support me when I am foolish.

*Thank you that sometimes I do what is good:
and forgive me when I have failed you.*

Teach me to serve with love:
and to know you in faith and truth.

*Guide me to see my life with good humour:
and to walk on with others in hope.*

PSALM 14 PSALM OF PRAYER

David Adam & Dag Hammersjold (Eric James Who is This? 2001)

God be with me as I pray:
come into the quiet within me.

*Calm me as you silenced the storm:
still me to hear your voice.*

Cease all the tumult inside me:
enfold me in the garment of your peace.

*Grant us purity in heart, so we may see you:
a quiet heart, so we may listen.*

Grant us a humble heart, so we may hear you:
a loving heart so we may serve.

*Grant us a faithful heart so we may love you:
for I do not fully know you, but I am yours.*

Since the longest journey of all is the journey inwards:
I do not comprehend, but I'm able to travel.

*I don't know when it was that I answered Yes:
but from that moment on, you are the Way.*

PSALM 15 PSALM OF THE HOSPICE

What's happening to me, God, with this onset of pain:
why are you bringing more suffering on me?

*It can't be true that you've let me down:
nor fair for you to want to punish me -*

in me there's something that's no part of me:
eating me up while I cannot control it.

*Will someone explain and say what's going on:
talk to me, help me to know what is happening?*

Is this the end? Where can I get help:
does anyone care that it's all so horrible?

*God, let me weep with you by day:
sustain me with tears through the hours of the night.*

I need life packed up and ready to go:
give me energy and time to work through the past.

*From those I have wronged I need forgiveness:
those I love best can give me support.*

I'd like not to die insignificantly:
but how can I manage my own destiny?

*Still there's the pain, although it's controlled:
I need your strength for the struggle ahead.*

Help me be able to accept my self:
then I'll be at peace with you and with others.

*Just a few more people I need for a while:
one relative's enough before I'm alone.*

Let there be someone beside me now:
I cannot speak but I can hear and understand.

*Now at the last all is done:
it is late, and I am ready.*
So long as you are with me, that is all:
now I can let go and let God.

*Into your hands I commend my life:
for you will redeem me and be merciful.*

PSALM 16 PSALM OF CREATION

on first looking into Stephen Hawking *A Brief History of Time*

Do we expect you to fit our ideas:
are we really cleverer than God?

*You've got to be greater than us or we cannot worship you:
would you be so badly damaged if I decided not to?*

I need you to be my God, so keep on surprising me:
you convert me so often I've lost count of the reasons.

*When new things are learned by science, there are you:
you're watching over your world, as we struggle to catch up.*

if the universe began with a bang, then you were in it:
if the new is emerging now, you are there also.

*Our theories can make no difference to you:
for you aren't another theory, you are our God.*